



TOWN OF ARLINGTON

MASSACHUSETTS 02476

781 - 316 - 3090

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

TO: Arlington Redevelopment Board

FROM: Carol Kowalski, Planning Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report for September 22, 2014 meeting

DATE: September 19, 2014

This meeting includes two continued hearings and substantial items related to the ARB buildings (the Central School, 23 Maple Street, Jefferson Cutter House).

Occupancy, Leasing

The first item relates to occupancy and leasing of spaces in two of the three Central School Account (Urban Renewal) buildings, the Central School and 23 Maple Street. The matter of leases and re-tenanting has been on the Board's work plan for some time. In recent months, I have focused on coordinating this work for the Board's action this fall with leases expected to be executed by January.

The Northeast Family Institute occupies 23 Maple Street. Their lease and extensions ended; they are tenants at will. A Request for Proposal to re-tenant the space is in draft form for anticipated public posting in October. The current tenant at 23 Maple Street is interested in submitting a proposal to remain in the building.

A significant amount of space in the Central School is occupied by two organizations without leases, the non-profit Arlington Seniors Association and the non-profit Mystic River Watershed Association. The Central School was redeveloped by the ARB and leased up in 1986. After the main offices were occupied, approximately 769 square feet of space on the third floor under the eaves remained vacant. This space was offered to the Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) which continues to work with Arlington volunteers and Town committees on water testing and open space and natural resources activities related to water quality in the Mystic River Watershed. MyRWA would like to remain in this office, if possible. I have informed the Director of MyRWA that a Request for Proposals would be prepared for leasing this space.

The non-profit Arlington Seniors Association (ASA) occupies 7,074 square feet of space in the Central School. The Town's Council on Aging (COA) occupies 1,406 square feet of space in the Central School. The demand for Council on Aging services has increased as the senior population has increased (recall attached letter from the Council on Aging Board that I had forwarded in May). Much of the space occupied by the ASA is comparatively under-utilized in the context of the demands on the Town's Council on Aging.

The history of the ASA's occupancy in the Central School is well-documented, but in short, by agreement, the non-profit ASA was expected to pay rent within two years of taking occupancy. This did not come to pass, so ASA has been an independent entity occupying a floor of the Central School without a lease or the mutual protections to landlord and tenant that come with a lease. For many years, this unique dynamic has resulted in both opportunities for collaboration but also anxieties over scheduling and allocation of space for use by all Arlington seniors. Perhaps more importantly, the lack of a lease presents liability to the Town.

The COA and the ASA both provide important services that should be allowed not only to continue but to expand and improve, if possible. This has been communicated in recent discussions between Town staff, the ARB Chair, and the ASA Board President, Vice President, and President-elect. The COA is committed to maintaining all activities currently offered to seniors. Having conferred with the ARB Chair, the Town Manager, and Town staff, I recommend to the Board the following: that the Arlington Council on Aging be allowed to occupy certain offices currently occupied by ASA by mid-October 2014, that week-day scheduling of daytime activities of the COA and ASA for space on the first floor be coordinated and scheduled by the Council on Aging, and further recommend that the Board consider issuing a Request for Proposals to lease an office on the first floor of the Central school of approximately 250 square feet of space for occupancy by an organization serving Arlington seniors. The ASA would be encouraged to submit a proposal to lease this space for its office.

I expect the Director of Health & Human Services, which oversees the Council on Aging staff, and Board members of both the Council on Aging and the Arlington Seniors Association will be present at the meeting. Meetings with the ASA Board leadership about my recommendation were held September 5 and September 12. Since then, I understand that a subsequent meeting was held by the ASA Board officers and the Director of Health & Human Services on continuity of services and the practical details of a possible transition should the Redevelopment Board adopt this recommendation.

Central School Design

Director of Health & Human Services will describe to the Board her intentions to contract for the services of a senior center designer for possible future renovations to update the Senior Center. The existing spaces were designed and built-out almost thirty years ago.

Environmental Design Review Hearings

The Board will hear the continuance of the Greater Boston Motor Sports Environmental Design Review special permit application. I expect the applicant, Mr. Cerundolo, to provide an engineered plan of the site on Monday evening. The Verizon continuance will follow.

Building Rental RFP's, Executive Session

The Requests for Proposals will include a minimum target rent. The Board may wish to act to designate a member to work with me to establish this minimum. If, alternatively, the Board discusses this fully at the meeting, the Board may wish to consider doing so in Executive Session, as it would entail discussing rental rate strategies the Board may eventually use in its negotiating position with the successful respondents.

I look forward to seeing the Board on Monday.